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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE THIRD
SESSION OF THE 21ST LEGISLATURE OF
THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA ON
THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 1988.

THE HONOURABLE W. HELEN HUNLEY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

I have the honour to welcome you to the Third Session of the Twenty-first Legislature of the Province of Alberta.

As you begin this Session of the Legislative Assembly today you are building on the momentum of several remarkable achievements. Each is a major contributor to the well-being of our Province, our communities and our families.

For sixteen days in February, our Province occupied the world stage. The XV Winter Olympic Games celebrated in **Calgary, Kananaskis, Canmore** and **Rocky View** captured the hearts of visitors, participants, and more than a billion television spectators around the world.

To the thousands of volunteers who helped make the Games such a resounding success, my government wishes to express its profound gratitude. The legacy of sports and recreational facilities and of international recognition, goodwill and friendship will benefit all Albertans for many years to come.

Alberta Leadership

1987 was an historical year for all of Canada but was of particular prominence for Alberta. Through the leadership of Alberta's Premier, as Chairman of the Provincial First Ministers, stronger ties were forged from sea to sea by the signing of **The 1987 Constitutional Accord,** known as the Meech Lake Accord. This extraordinary achievement, unanimously agreed by a vote of this Legislative Assembly on December 7, 1987, confirms the equality of all provinces within the Canadian constitutional family.

The Meech Lake Accord contains a commitment for First Ministers to meet, beginning this year, to address meaningful reform of the Senate. A high priority for my government, again with the leadership of Alberta's Premier, will be the presentation to the constitutional meeting of a proposal for a Triple 'E' Senate — a Senate which is **Elected**, with **Equal** provincial representation and **Effective** powers.

In January, after months of intensive and crucial negotiations, during most of which Alberta's Premier was chairman of the Provincial First Ministers, the **Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement** was signed. My government looks forward to the Parliament of Canada and the United States Congress passing the necessary legislation to bring this agreement into effect by 1989. It will assure trading access to the largest and richest market in the world and will bring long term benefits to many sectors of the Alberta economy.

In November of this year, my government will host the 4th annual **First Ministers' Conference on the Economy** in **Calgary.** The conference will provide government leaders the opportunity to discuss and develop cooperative policies and programs to respond to the economic and social challenges facing Canadians.

Economy Regaining Momentum

The Alberta economy strengthened in the second half of 1987.

Oil and gas investment recovered due to my government's incentive programs and to higher prices through much of the year. Increased exports also stimulated activity and employment.

Unfortunately, many grain farmers have been under tremendous pressure due to low world market prices. However, the situation for livestock producers is much more positive.

My government's diversification efforts are producing success. Major new investments are underway in forestry. The tourism and high technology sectors are making solid gains, with Alberta leading the nation last year in new jobs for technically-oriented professionals. A record 1,152,000 Albertans were at work.

As outlined in the 1987 Budget Address, my government's fiscal plan is directed to balancing the budget in a fair and orderly manner over a period of four years. As a result of this responsible approach to managing provincial finances, investor confidence in Alberta has been improved.

Assuring Excellence in Education

My government places the highest priority on education.

A new school act will be introduced during this session which will set a clear direction for education in the future. This act will be substantially changed from Bill 59, introduced last year, to reflect the very extensive public input received. The new act is founded on these principles: access to quality education, equity, flexibility, responsiveness, and accountability.

Using a gift of $1 million from the Kahanoff Foundation in **Calgary**, the Department of Advanced Education has established an endowment fund of $3 million. The income will be used to support a Centre of Excellence in Training Teachers of Gifted Students.

Implementation of the policy paper, **Secondary Education in Alberta,** announced in June 1985, will continue. New courses and programs are well advanced and will be enhanced this year by additional funds to be presented in the budget later in this Session.

As more Albertans of all ages seek further opportunities in post-secondary education, enrollments continue to grow. More financing to support increasing enrollments has been added to institutional base budgets. In response to the special growth in northern Alberta, extra funding will be provided to Grant MacEwen College in **Edmonton** for the delivery of university transfer programs for several hundred Albertans.

Advancing Good Health and Medical Care

The Premier's Commission on Future Health Care for Albertans will recommend a course of action to ensure Alberta's health care system continues to be the best in Canada well into the next century. The Commission will explore the impacts of changes which have occurred recently in health care delivery, beginning with the role of nurses, and has invited ideas and suggestions from all interested Albertans.

The **Ministerial Committee on Ambulance Services** will complete its review and present its report and recommendations. Also, the report, **A New Vision For Long Term Care — Meeting the Need,** has been completed. Its recommendations are directed at further improving what is already one of the most effective systems of long-term care in Canada.

Major improvements and additions to the Royal Alexandra Hospital in **Edmonton** have been approved. These improvements will enable the hospital to treat a greater share of the more complex and difficult cases from northern and central Alberta.

My government is convinced that good physical, mental and emotional health lead to a lifestyle which provides the vitality necessary for strong families and vibrant communities. Over the next year, my government is committed to substantially increase efforts to prevent disease, to promote health, to develop community care alternatives for institutional care and to nurture individual independence.

My government shares concern with many Albertans about the increasingly high number of teenage pregnancies and the high rates of sexually transmitted diseases. Accordingly, my government will implement a comprehensive reproductive health strategy to reduce these high rates. This strategy will include family planning and sexuality education programs and will ensure access to clinics in all regions of Alberta to screen sexually transmitted diseases.

As part of my government's overall emphasis on the prevention of disease and workplace injury, the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System will be implemented. It will provide information on hazardous materials to employers and employees.

The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission will continue its effective programs of quality treatment and its education programs for all Albertans. The Commission will expand treatment capability in **Grande Prairie** to serve northwest Alberta.

Strengthening Agriculture

The primary importance of agriculture and the family farm have been keys to Alberta's economic and social well-being since our Province was formed. My government continues to recognize that priority by providing a commitment to the agricultural industry which ensures its stability and economic growth.

During the past year, my government has vigorously presented Alberta's position on agriculture in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade multilateral negotiations and the Canada-United States trade negotiations.

My government is especially enthusiastic about the benefits to Alberta producers which the **Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement** offers. My government will continue to ensure that the interests of Alberta's food producers are advanced in national and international policy forums.

My government is concerned about the serious problems caused by depressed international commodity prices. Alberta has successfully fought to have national assistance plans developed for farmers. Alberta's special programs to reduce farm input costs such as the Farm Fuel Distribution Allowance and fertilizer price protection will be continued in 1988 as will the Crow Benefit Offset Program.

The $2 billion Alberta Farm Credit Stability Program, a major goal of my government, has resulted in annual savings to Alberta farm families of more than $40 million based on current interest rates. Following a full review of the Agricultural Development Corporation, my government has reaffirmed its commitment to beginning farmers, to rural communities and to a diversified agricultural economy.

The Remote Area Heating Allowance Program, the Primary Agricultural Producers Rebate Program, and The Farm Water Grant Program have also been extended for an additional three years.

My government is pleased that more than 6,000 rural party line telephones have been converted to private lines to enhance the quality of life and services for these rural Albertans. The coming year will be very important in this major conversion program, as a further 26,000 rural party lines will be converted to private lines.

As a result of a comprehensive review of the Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance Program, my government will make adjustments to be more responsive to various conditions throughout the Province. To provide an income safety net for more Alberta producers, my government's participation in tripartite stabilization programs has been expanded to include sugar beets and dry edible beans.

In partnership with the Alberta Food Processors Association my government is undertaking an enhanced three year marketing strategy to increase markets for Alberta agricultural products.

Secondary value-added agricultural processing is an important component of my government's strategy for economic diversification and stability in agriculture and the food industry. $53 million in assistance has been offered to over 600 projects ranging from food processing to innovative new products. These incentive programs have encouraged substantial private sector investment in many communities.

The Farming for the Future Program continues as a key component of Alberta's agricultural research effort. A new element of that effort, the Alberta Farm Machinery Research Centre at **Lethbridge**, has recently been announced.

Soil conservation legislation will be introduced which will enable local municipalities to strengthen their bylaws concerning management and reclamation of land.

Diversifying The Economy

Balanced economic growth will continue as a priority to ensure that all Albertans have the opportunity to share in this promising future.

Strategies to capitalize on Alberta's traditional strengths of energy and agriculture, and to use this economic foundation as a springboard for growth and diversification, are showing good results.

An important step in Alberta's diversification plan is the construction of a new magnesium plant near **High River,** expected to begin this spring. This plant will provide 600 person years or more in construction jobs and a permanent work force rising to at least 250 by 1994. It also creates the potential for the casting and fabrication of magnesium products adjacent to the plant.

Alberta's petrochemical industry is benefiting from the strong worldwide demand for petrochemicals. Further investments in this key sector are under consideration in areas such as ethylene, ethylene derivatives and fuel additives.

My government has aggressively developed its long-term economic diversification blueprint. Alberta businesses have diversified into tourism, forestry and the development of advanced technologies and have rapidly created new and rewarding employment opportunities for our citizens.

Diversifying through Technology

Alberta's academic excellence and internationally recognized research scholars and facilities have developed promising products and processes attracting worldwide interest. My government is assisting to transfer these innovations from the laboratory to the marketplace. Biotechnology, electronics and microelectronics, telecommunications, computing and software, lasers, and new materials are the technological streams my government especially wishes to encourage.

More than 40,000 people in Alberta are now employed in advanced technologies. 1,200 companies are busy applying new technologies. Alberta's expertise is being exported daily to many parts of the globe.

My government is committed to assisting our energy and manufacturing industries in the adaptation of new technologies to maintain their international competitiveness, to reduce production costs and to provide exportable services. My government will continue to provide special support to Alberta's small and emerging advanced technology companies.

Increased support will be given to the Alberta Research Council so that it can share facilities and researchers with private companies to develop and apply new technologies.

In 1988, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research will open its second medical research facility. The Foundation was started in 1980 with a $300 million endowment grant from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund and will support more than 100 full time medical researchers in 1988. An International Board of Review reported last year that the Fund has created a remarkable milieu for medical research and training which has already benefited patients.

Diversifying through Forestry

My government has achieved unprecedented growth in Alberta's forest industry. In 1988, there will be four large forestry projects underway which, upon completion, will provide over 5,000 new direct and indirect jobs in central and northern Alberta. The combined capital costs of these and other projects will total $1.5 billion. With a priority on forest renewal, and a resource among the most economic in the world, continued strong growth in this sector is assured.

Major projects are underway or approved at **Hinton, Whitecourt** and **Peace River.** Expansion of the Champion Forest Products pulp mill at **Hinton** will create 370 jobs at a capital cost of $361 million. In **Whitecourt,** Millar-Western Ltd. is nearing completion of a $194 million pulp mill. It will employ new technology and create 365 direct jobs.

Also at **Whitecourt,** the **Edmonton**-based Alberta Newsprint Corporation will invest $360 million in a newsprint facility with state-of-the-art technology, creating 375 jobs. This will be Alberta's first newsprint mill. Doubling of Alberta Newsprint's capacity is expected as part of the company's long-term plans.

The largest of the major forestry projects is the Daishowa Canada Ltd. pulp mill to be built near **Peace River.** Strong growth of the regional economy is anticipated as the project will create 600 direct and 1,200 indirect jobs with a capital cost in excess of $500 million. Daishowa Canada's mill will be one of the largest in Canada and is unique in that it is primarily based on aspen.

Alberta leads Canada in reforestation practices. Reforestation will continue to be a very high priority of my government in order to support strong growth in this sector. All timber harvest areas are reforested to ensure the complete renewal of the forest. Forestry management is based on sustaining yields for generations to come.

My government has also incorporated the highest environmental protection measures in the design of Alberta's forestry projects. Multi-use planning ensures that recreation, watershed and wildlife resources are protected.

Diversifying through Tourism

To build on the worldwide awareness of Alberta generated by the XV Olympic Winter Games, my government will launch a new international promotion program. As well, the successful **Take An Alberta Break** program will be renewed and expanded to adjacent provinces and states.

In addition, my government will initiate with the tourism industry a new joint marketing program, Team Tourism.

Response from communities throughout Alberta has been extremely positive to my government's Community Tourism Action Program. The program will provide cost-shared funding for tourism projects, mainstreet themes and innovative ideas identified by communities.

During the next five years these new initiatives will provide over $50 million to assist the tourism sector to grow from its current annual level of $2.3 billion to a $10 billion industry by the year 2000.

Promoting our Business Entrepreneurs

The business community is the generator of both jobs and economic growth. In 1987, there were over 17,000 new businesses registered in this Province, as Albertans once again demonstrated they are among the world's most innovative and competitive entrepreneurs.

My government's assistance for new ventures provides programs to encourage the formation of new businesses as well as to develop new markets for Alberta goods and services. New businesses helped by the Alberta Small Business Incubator Support Program share common space and administration services, and have access to information and management counselling.

My government is committed to providing the business community with viable approaches to financing. Last year, the Alberta Opportunity Company's mandate was expanded and now includes a venture capital program in addition to loans and loan guarantees.

International trade is the lifeblood of the Alberta economy. Over 200,000 Albertans derive direct and indirect employment from the sale of goods and services to the United States, the Asia Pacific region, the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, and the European Economic Community.

The **Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement** provides a window of opportunity to dramatically increase trade and investment opportunities in energy, agriculture, petrochemicals, forest products, processed foods, clothing, manufactured products, advanced technologies and business services exported to the United States.

To ensure that Alberta's entrepreneurs have the skills and resources to take advantage of new international opportunities, the Export Services Support Program and the Market Development Assistance Program will be strengthened. To enhance international marketing skills the Management Assistance Program will be expanded.

My government will continue to promote Alberta's attractive investment climate to prospective investors around the world through more cooperative joint departmental initiatives such as the highly-successful Asia Pacific mission of last year. Alberta's outstanding potential for trade and investment will be reaffirmed.

In order to better safeguard the interests of depositors, a new Credit Union Act will be introduced. The Alberta Securities Commission is being strengthened and expanded to provide full service through its **Calgary** office.

Continuing Recovery in the Energy Sector

1987 was a year of recovery for the Alberta oil and gas industry. Drilling activity improved dramatically, land sales were up sharply, production increased and over $3 billion in new capital was attracted to the oil and gas sector. A major natural gas discovery in the **Caroline** area added an estimated 2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves to the Province. Exploration continues to focus on the **Caroline** area, as well as in the **High Prairie, Rainbow Lake, Zama, Joffre** and **Crossfield** regions.

Natural gas markets also improved during 1987. Natural gas exports to the United States increased by 30% over 1986 volumes. My government's

pursuit of natural gas deregulation and the **Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement** will permit the natural gas industry to continue to benefit from improving natural gas markets.

Oil sands and heavy oil development is a priority of my government. It is emerging as a vital factor in generating employment opportunities, and investment benefits, and in maintaining our crude oil supply capability for future generations of Albertans, and for all Canadians. The current fiscal environment has encouraged over $1 billion worth of investment in heavy oil and oil sands development projects, including projects at **Cold Lake, Fort McMurray,** and **Elk Point.** Negotiations are proceeding on a number of other projects as well.

My government will continue to work with industry and with other governments in Canada to promote the upgrading and development of our oil sands and heavy oil resources. In keeping with this goal, legislation governing the terms and conditions of oil sands leases will be amended to encourage accelerated development of these deposits.

My government has acted on several fronts to ensure that the coal industry maintains its viability despite a difficult world market environment. Joint industry/government research and development programs will be pursued in such areas as the viability of coal slurry pipelines, coal agglomeration, heavy oil and coal co-processing, and the use of coal-fired steam generation in oil sands and heavy oil production.

Enhancing Employment Opportunities

During the coming year my government will continue its vigorous efforts to assist Albertans in realizing their employment, training, and career aspirations. Besides the expanded opportunities created by economic recovery, my government will support job creation and training programs, as well as career planning services throughout the Province.

My government is particularly pleased by the success of the Employment Alternatives Program which will continue in 1988. Introduced in June, 1987, the program provided social allowance recipients and those whose unemployment insurance had been exhausted, with work experience and training opportunities to enable them to find permanent employment. More than 6,000 positions were approved under the Employment Alternatives Program during its first seven months of operation, reflecting the strong work ethic of Albertans.

As part of an educational process to acquaint our young people with the possibilities open to them when they leave school, my government has introduced the Stepping Stones Program as a pilot project in six **Edmonton** schools. Over 400 women across Alberta have volunteered to act as role models in this program. They will share their experiences in a wide range of occupations with junior high students, demonstrating the scope of employment opportunities open to our youth.

Supporting Municipal Leaders

The Premier's Provincial-Municipal Council, chaired by the Premier, is a major new leadership step. Through this Council, my government will work with municipalities to identify alternative responses to the needs of Alberta communities into the next century.

The Municipal Statutes Review Committee, made up of representatives from municipalities throughout the Province, is reviewing all legislation that affects Alberta municipalities. The committee is working cooperatively with my government in this major undertaking.

My government will also initiate a Regional Response Improvement Program to further assist municipalities in obtaining additional emergency response equipment.

During the past year, under the special Alberta Municipal Partnership in Local Employment Program, $26.2 million in unconditional grants was distributed to Alberta municipalities to help foster local employment.

Building On Our Values

My government is proud of the continuing commitment of its citizens to long-standing values. Honesty, integrity, self-reliance, compassion, and a love of family, of home, and of community, provide a solid framework within which my government will continue its agenda for action.

Based on these values, a social policy statement, **Caring and Responsibility,** will be presented to the Legislature during the current Session. Social programs will be founded upon the principles in this policy statement.

My government recognizes that persons with disabilities should be full and equal participants in the life of Alberta. To achieve this participation, my government wishes to enhance the status, dignity and quality of life for these Albertans. Legislation will be introduced to implement the **Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.** It will advise the government and inform all Albertans about issues of interest and concern to persons with disabilities.

In recognition of the increasing proportion of seniors in the population, the Senior Citizens' Advisory Council has been focusing on ways to assure that seniors can continue to enjoy their own homes and independent lifestyles for as long as possible. In keeping with this direction, the theme of Senior Citizens' Week in 1988 will be: **Senior — Active in the Community.** The Fourth Alberta Seniors' Games, another demonstration of the vitality of our senior citizens, will be held in August in **Vermilion.** My government continues to recognize the very solid foundation provided to Alberta by our pioneers.

Albertans have a proud heritage of providing assistance to those citizens who cannot help themselves. My government has been actively reviewing its social allowance program, giving special attention to the ability of recipients to provide nutritional meals to their families. Rates will increase substantially based on recognized measurements, where need is shown.

Amendments to the Child Welfare Act will be introduced this year and decisions on child care reforms will be made after full study of the recently announced National Child Care Strategy.

Following extensive consultation with Albertans, my government will introduce a new labour code to provide for a fair and equitable relationship between employees and employers.

New initiatives in the areas of law enforcement, driver training, driver assessment, and more effective management of problem drivers will be implemented. In addition, the government will conduct all driver testing.

The well established and successful Checkstop program will be intensified and new educational programs will make Albertans more aware of the dangers of impaired driving. My government will assist business and special interest groups to reduce the human, social and economic costs associated with this problem.

My government places a high priority on the safety of Albertans and on the provision of services to victims of crime. In order to better ensure that victims are treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity, stronger ties will be forged between government departments, police-based programs and organizations providing services to victims. Better communication between these key players will result in programs of consistent, high quality across the Province.

Treasuring our Heritage

The communities of **Fort Chipewyan** and **Fort Vermilion** celebrate their Bicentennial this year. These are our Province's oldest trading centres. They were originally built as forts in 1788 by the North West Company to intercept furs then being traded into Hudson Bay and the Hudson's Bay Company. Roderick Mackenzie, Charles Boyer, Alexander Mackenzie and Peter Pond are historical figures whose exploits will be celebrated along with stories of the fur trade, exploration, and early agriculture. Albertans extend congratulations and best wishes to the residents of **Fort Chipewyan** and **Fort Vermilion.**

The Multicultural Commission, to be chaired by a Member of the Legislative Assembly, will be established to strengthen my government's commitment to the many ethno-cultural communities that enrich the lives of all Albertans.

Also this year, Ukrainian Albertans are commemorating the Millennium with Ukrainians worldwide. Christianity arrived in the Ukraine 1,000 years ago, and the numerous celebrations throughout the Province to mark the event are strongly supported by my government.

My government has given priority to developing regional library systems to bring a high level of library and information service to Albertans, particularly in smaller centres and rural areas. To help these systems operate effectively and efficiently, capital assistance will be provided for the renovation or construction of headquarters facilities.

In addition, funding has been approved for the establishment of Alberta's fifth and newest regional library — the Shortgrass Library System

which will provide service to over 60,000 people in the southeast part of the Province.

This year, construction will begin on the Reynolds-Alberta Museum in **Wetaskiwin.** As well as providing Albertans with a lasting tribute to our transportation and agricultural history, the museum will create another fascinating tourist attraction in north-central Alberta.

The Remington-Alberta Carriage Centre, an interpretive centre for a collection of horse-drawn vehicles, has been approved for construction in **Cardston.** The Centre, which will house the combined carriage collections of the Remington family, the Glenbow-Alberta Institute and the Provincial Museum of Alberta, will serve as an exciting gateway attraction to a province-wide network of provincial historic sites and museums.

The Canada-China-Alberta Ex Terra Dinosaur Project is on-going and will continue to strengthen relations with the People's Republic of China. In addition it will draw world-wide attention to this unique portion of our Province's cultural and historical heritage.

My government is also committed to the protection and enhancement of Alberta's environment which is so important to our quality of life and to our recreational opportunities. During 1987, eight new ecological reserves were established to preserve unique wilderness lands.

During the coming year, new initiatives to strengthen the enforcement of Alberta's environmental statutes will be undertaken as well as a strengthening of Alberta's conservation strategies.

Members of the Legislative Assembly: in due course you will be presented with the budget estimates. You will be asked to authorize the necessary funds for operating services and expenditures and to endorse a program of capital financing for the Government of Alberta.

I leave you now to the business of the Session, with full confidence that, as elected representatives, your debates and your votes will reflect your responsibilities to all Albertans.

I pray for your wisdom and your strength.

God save the Queen.